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Executive editor and publisher Crocker Snow Jr., and WorldPaper

# The Bimonthly Planet

WorldPaper, the Tabloid With Global Reach

By Stacy Jolna

Special to The Washington Post

BOSTON—As Soviet tanks rumbled over the border of Afghanistan earlier this winter, Crocker Snow Jr. began mobilizing his own army—a group of editors and writers on six continents. His objective: to publish an array of perspectives on the crisis for his bimonthly called WorldPaper.

A tabloid that currently appears in 10 papers around the world and reaches 1.4 million people, WorldPaper recently celebrated its first year as a "global community newspaper." Stories are edited in Boston, where they are typeset and transformed into film negatives for shipment to "Host" newspapers, which print them.

Says executive editor and publisher Snow: "Our role is to offer the voices of the world, speaking for themselves on common universal problems, an opportunity to present a pluralistic view of things mankind is dealing with—

like population, hunger, arms control, endangered cultures . . .

"And when this thing in Afghanistan happened, we thought, 'My God, this is a remarkable event to show how the world interacts today.'"

The gaunt, 40-year-old Snow, a former Newsweek correspondent and foreign editor of the Boston Globe, sits relaxed in the newspaper's spacious office here. He has just solved one of the problems in publishing a global newspaper supplement written by native journalists: getting negatives of WorldPaper into a Latin American country in spite of government resistance to some of the material.

Copy editors are clustered in a corner working in Spanish, English and Arabic. Large maps line the walls. A blackboard is covered with story ideas.

Snow traces the tale of how he arranged an international debate on Af-

ghanistan that appears in WorldPaper's March/April issue:

"So first we contacted the Soviets through the Novosti Press Agency and we said, 'You haven't had a fair hearing here; give us your side. We want a piece rationalizing your actions as direct as possible.'"

Moscow responded with a commentary from Vladimir Ostrovsky, a political writer for Novosti. He charges that the CIA and the Chinese were behind recruitment of an invasion force to overthrow the pro-Soviet Afghan government.

And, says Ostrovsky, Peking and Washington supplied this counter revolutionary army with 10,000 tons of weapons and ammunition. "No wonder," Ostrovsky writes, "that the Afghan movement applied to the Soviet Union for military aid way back in December 1978, while the new Afghan government repeated the request on Dec. 27, 1979."

WorldPaper's editors were pleasantly surprised when they received a rebuttal written by Marshall D. Shulman, special adviser to Secretary of State Cyrus Vance on Soviet affairs. Soviet intervention, he says, was a "gross miscalculation." He adds: "The Soviets' version of events comes apart at the seams whenever it is subjected to scrutiny."

From China comes an article by a Peking journalist charging that the White House was duped into believing Soviet President Leonid Brezhnev is a "dove."

"Since U.S. reaction to previous Soviet moves on the global chessboard has been halfhearted and feeble, the Kremlin reasoned that the White House surely would not risk a military confrontation over Afghanistan—particularly while tied down by the hostage crisis in Iran."

Snow picks up his story: "Then we decided we don't just want a ping-pong game between the principals. We wanted to put this conflict into a context of how big nations react. So we got a Kenyan, angry black African Hilary Ng'weno, for a Third World view."

Ng'weno, a Harvard-educated associate editor of WorldPaper, castigates the superpowers in a 1,650-word diatribe and offers advice to the weaker developing nations to "avoid walking in dark political alleys alone," likening the superpowers to rapists.

WorldPaper rounded out its Afghanistan coverage with a historical perspective on the confrontation by British historian Peter Calvocoressi, a report from India and a letter from an American anthropologist on the Indian subcontinent denying Soviet charges that he was CIA operative working out of Pakistan.

"Nobody else would go to Moscow or Peking or Nairobi to get their

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views," says Snow. "It just isn't done in American journalism today."

That perceived void led to a meeting at a Boston restaurant in April, 1976 of Snow: John N. Cole, a naturalist and former editor of the *Maine Times*; Mark Gerzon, an author now serving as *WorldPaper's* managing editor, and New York financier Harry Hollins.

Hollins, who provided \$40,000 (as did several other individuals) and a vision, was leader of the 1930s movement for world federalism, and, later, co-founder of the Institute for World Order.

"He initiated what we thought of at first as a harebrained but fascinating intellectual exercise—to conceive of a global publication based on the notion that the world is sufficiently interdependent and that there should be some way that we can talk together about common subjects," Snow says of Hollins.

The paper is distributed as a supplement to existing newspapers, which pick up the cost of printing in return for an opportunity to sell advertisements in *WorldPaper*.

Host papers are permitted to remove three pages of editorial content designated by *WorldPaper* and replace them with local advertisements. The papers also get a 15 percent commission on sales of any international ads.

In what Snow views as a major achievement in projecting a pluralistic perspective, *WorldPaper* signed abroad as its Eastern European associate editor the head of a communist newspaper in Bucharest.

But a major loss was the Lebanese associate editor for the Middle East. After the signing of the Israeli—Egyptian peace treaty, a Jordanian newspaper rejected *WorldPaper* because The Jerusalem Post was scheduled to carry it, and the editor felt compelled to resign.

In the United States, *WorldPaper* is carried only by The Dallas Morning news and the Charleston, S.C., News and Courier.

"Dallas is becoming more of an international city; we feel more of a kinship with the rest of the world,

and *WorldPaper* is a fine thing which appeals to people who care about more than just the surface news," says Tom Simmons, executive editor of The Morning News.

However, The Boston Globe, The Minneapolis Tribune and The Helena, Mont., Independent Record, all of which carried *WorldPaper's* seminal edition, have since dropped it, mostly for financial reasons.

Says Wallace Allen, associate editor of The Minneapolis Tribune: "There was no great enthusiasm for exploring the advertising potential of *WorldPaper*." William Taylor, publisher of The Globe, adds "It was about \$20,000 a throw and . . . . We found it difficult to get advertisers interested. It didn't fit the bill from a content point of view."

Snow calls The Globe's decision "a blessing in disguise" that pointed the new publication to smaller circulation newspapers in important international cities.

"The production costs for a mass-circulation paper are greater and, conversely, no international advertiser really wants that large circulation," says Snow.

*WorldPaper* would like to aim at distribution as an advertising supplement to a small percentage of newspaper readers in large United States cities—a move that would cut production costs for the host papers and attract bigger advertisers.

*WorldPaper* continues to operate in the red, with \$550,000 in debts Snow says. But he adds that it is inching toward the black, and may reach the break-even point expected by the end of next year.

"We've never had more than a 2½-month cushion; the wolf's at the door, but it always has been and we're not scared about that," says Snow. *WorldPaper's* morale is boosted by its ability to publish on only \$700,000 in capital.

"Maybe I'm a romantic, but I'm convinced that had we started with a large block of change we probably never would have gotten as far as we have," says Snow. "We'd still be sitting around in Bangkok or somewhere sucking our thumbs and talking about doing it—rather than doing it."